

VI. Instructional Resources

- Content criteria
- Presentational and organizational criteria
- Pedagogical criteria
- Technology

An effective foreign language program requires a variety of standards-driven instructional resources. When it comes to the adoption of instructional materials, foreign languages require flexibility and creativity so that a variety of materials are available for use in the classroom. It is through variety that students are provided with a classroom environment rich in language and culture. It is recommended that districts exhibit similar flexibility and allow their foreign language teachers the freedom and funding necessary to incorporate nontraditional and authentic supplementary materials into local programs

Authentic foreign language materials are not luxuries but integral components of any program. The State's materials adoption process should be flexible enough to allow school districts the option of choosing alternatives to traditional textbooks. All foreign language resources should meet the following criteria:

- Materials support a sequential, articulated, standards-driven curriculum as established in this framework.
- Materials incorporate an active and creative role for teachers and students, taking diverse learning styles and current research into account.
- Materials include authentic and meaningful content, with the five goals of the standards integrated throughout.

Materials must also satisfy guidelines of the South Carolina Department of Education's Educational Technology Plan. More specific criteria, categorized according to content, presentation, and pedagogy, follow here.

Useful media and technology

- foreign newspapers and magazines (including purchase of duplication rights),
- fiction and nonfiction written in other languages
- video and audio tapes produced in other languages,
- foreign television programs,
- foreign language computer software,
- foreign language CD-ROMs
- authentic restaurant menus and hotel bills
- hotel and train schedules from the target country,
- résumés and job applications written in other languages, and
- foreign language greeting cards and announcements.

Content criteria

All foreign language instructional materials should meet the following content criteria:

- Content is meaningful and can be easily related to the lives of students.
- Content includes language that is authentic and natural and based on real-life experiences.
- Language is viewed as a means of communication and not as a collection of isolated words and phrases.
- Content places primary emphasis on the five goals of the standards: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.
- Grammatical structures and vocabulary are introduced naturally as components of themes and functions.
- Content is appropriate to the language needs, age levels, and interests of students.
- Activities are personalized, and students are encouraged to express their own ideas in their own words.
- Content becomes progressively more challenging as students advance in the language.
- Information is current and accurate.
- Content is not encyclopedic in quantity but encourages students to seek other resources for additional information.
- Cultural content is integrated throughout, reflecting multiethnic diversity within language groups and giving an accurate view of everyday life.
- Authentic resources provide the cultural context in which the language occurs, enabling students to gain understanding of the relationship among the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture.
- Activities link the classroom to the global community.

Technology-enhanced language learning

“Technology alone is not what makes a difference in the teaching of reading; the use of technology coupled with sound pedagogical principles is also necessary. Technology is nothing but a tool in the hands of the teacher. We can rest assured that computers will never replace teachers, but we cannot ignore the power that technology has to enhance both our teaching and the learning process of students. Consequently, we can expect that those who understand and recognize this power and who know how to use the technologies available will eventually supplant those who do not.”

Bush and Terry, eds., Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, 150.

Presentational and organizational criteria

All foreign language instructional materials should meet the following presentational and organizational criteria:

- Materials present directions clearly, promote sensitivity toward other cultures, and offer activities designed to promote student success.
- The target language is the primary medium for learning and communication.
- Materials provide ample activities in a range of contexts reflecting the target cultures.
- Materials are appealing and eye-catching.
- Authentic materials are integrated into content-relevant activities.
- Teacher editions and manuals contain clear instructions for use of materials, along with model units. Programs for training teachers in use of materials are provided where appropriate.
- In modern languages, functional use of the language is the organizing principle of instruction while grammar and vocabulary support a standards-driven curriculum. In classical languages, grammar and vocabulary play a more central role.
- Technological components provide engaging opportunities for students to acquire the target language.

Technology links

At Conway High School, students in the school's International Exchange Program communicated with students at a sister school in Madrid via videoconferencing. Using this technology, students were able to see and talk to each other on a regular basis. When students from Conway High traveled to Madrid, they were well prepared for their trip and felt they had already become friends with their student hosts in Spain.

At several other high schools in South Carolina, students of French, German, and Spanish communicate with students in other countries via e-mail.

Pedagogical criteria

All foreign language instructional materials should meet the following pedagogical criteria:

- Activities are open-ended and encourage creative use of language and negotiated meaning in a variety of situations.
- Activities call for higher-order thinking skills and reflection, not simply recollection of factual information.
- All standards are taught in an integrated fashion.
- Ample opportunities are provided for active communication in the interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes among students.

- Activities include a variety of tasks appropriate to the learning objectives.
- Activities are designed to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles and are based on current research.
- Activities are student-centered and require student involvement and responsibility.
- An interdisciplinary approach is used with themes that encourage connections to other content areas.
- Materials include formative and summative assessments of student performance of all the standards.
- Concepts, functions, and vocabulary are recycled throughout in a spiraling fashion; that is, they are introduced multiple times in various contexts, each time building on skills developed previously.
- The integration of technology into classroom instruction accesses up-to-the-minute cultural materials and provides opportunities for interactive education.
- Activities provide opportunities for students to compare the target language and culture to their own.

Technology

The use of new technologies creates experiences that are compelling for language learners. Multimedia is a way of managing and presenting the kinds of resources increasingly needed for effective language teaching, as new insights into language acquisition are developed and curricular goals are expanded (see Michael D. Bush, and Robert M. Terry, eds. *Technology-Enhanced Learning*). The benefits of using technology include

- access to authentic language and culture,
- active student learning through interactive technology,
- student self-pacing and sequencing,
- cooperative learning environment,
- access to the community outside the walls of the school,
- access to various instructors and to less commonly taught languages through interactive distance learning, and
- access to up-to-the-minute materials.

Technology promotes positive education reform

“Computers and powerful telecommunications technologies can and are being exploited to promote positive education reform: by creating student-centered instructional contexts that focus on building critical thinking skills; by presenting authentic, challenging tasks that engage students in meaningful learning experiences that are appropriate to individual students’ levels and needs; by facilitating collaborative learning activities that encourage all students to participate and contribute; and by linking students from different places and cultures to enhance learning and intercultural understanding.”

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, 181.

The use of technology can be divided into two categories: information access and interactive instruction.

Current technology systems provide a variety of media through which students and teachers may access authentic materials. These media include:

- software for stand-alone and networked computers, such as
 - courseware,
 - content-specific software, and
 - application software—e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, data bases;
- optical-storage technology such as videodiscs or digital videodiscs (DVDs);
- the Internet and Internet-related resources such as audio and video streaming and access to large databases;
- electronic media—e.g., e-mail, on-line newspapers, and magazines;
- audio-video taped materials;
- satellite; and
- broadcast media.